

Schuylkill River Heritage Center

Phoenix Columns

Summer 2022

OUR HISTORIC PHOENIX WHEEL WILL FINALLY HAVE A HOME

In 1895, the Phoenix Bridge Company, a subsidiary of the Phoenix Iron & Steel Company, manufactured four Phoenix Wheels. Three of them are long gone, but the one in Asbury Park NJ operated until 1988. It was sold to an amusement park in Biloxi, Mississippi and operated there until 1998. Bill Sitar, a NJ developer, bought it and brought it back to Asbury Park, hoping to revive the waterfront, but it was never used. With widespread community support, the Schuylkill River Heritage Center (SRHC) purchased the wheel from Mr. Sitar in 2008. Thanks to generous sponsorship donations, we were able to restore all sixteen of the wheel's seating baskets. **We also learned that our wheel is the oldest one in the world.** Although several locations in Phoenixville were considered over the years, none ever came to fruition.

Now, the SRHC has a partnership agreement with Phoenixville Borough. The wheel will finally have a "home" on a former industrial property that is now owned by the Borough; next to its current parking lot. Once the site improvements have been made, **the Phoenix Wheel will be installed as an outdoor sculpture, adjacent to the French Creek Trail.** The Borough is responsible for the site improvements and the SRHC is responsible for restoring, reassembling and installing the wheel. Our engineer, **Tom Zeigler**, has created the plans for how the wheel will be restored reassembled and installed, and **SRHC member Gern Jaeger, owner of Specialty Metals**, will do the work needed to restore, reassemble and install the wheel. His team also created the bridge sculpture for the SRHC in Renaissance Park. The SRHC will also provide lighting for the wheel, signage that interprets the wheel's history, and recognizes our donors. We will also have a tall glass fence around it so the wheel will be protected, but will be entirely visible for all to enjoy.

The SRHC and the Borough have requested grant funding from PA and Chester County to help cover the cost for the property improvements and the Phoenix Wheel project. The preliminary budget cost for the Phoenix Wheel Project to be fulfilled is **\$770,000**. Once we learn what or if grant funds will be received, the SRHC will initiate a major community campaign to enable the SRHC to create a unique sculpture in a place that combines recreational activities, a place to park a car and is an historic asset that benefits everyone who lives in or visits the Phoenixville community!!



This is the Borough engineer's preliminary plan for the Phoenix Wheel project.

2022 Heritage Award Celebration Honorees



This year the Schuylkill River Heritage Center is honoring **David and Susan Meadows** for their lifetime of leadership, involvement, commitment and service to the Phoenixville community in so many ways. Their years of leadership and participation have nurtured Phoenixville's historic legacy. The Heritage Award Celebration will be held at The Foundry on **Thursday evening, October 13th**.

It is ironic that the Foundry might not exist without David Meadows' leadership at Phoenixville's volunteer fire company. In 1996, a fire broke out inside the Foundry building which had not yet been restored. It was David who got the fire company volunteers to immediately respond to put out the fire. This rapid response saved the building from being destroyed beyond repair. He continues to lead the fire company, and also plays a major role in the Phoenixville Area Historical Society. His leadership has fostered a sense of community benevolence and support for both organizations.

Susan Meadows continues to serve on the Phoenixville Area Economic Development Corporation (PAEDCO) Board of Directors as well as being President of the Board of the Phoenixville Library Foundation. It was Susan who encouraged the PAEDCO board to support the re-creation of the Phoenixville Mural and Renaissance Park. It was her strong leadership that enabled the SRHC to purchase the property from PAEDCO and the opportunity to bring back the mural and reinvent Renaissance Park. Susan's creation of the **Generations** store is a unique and special attraction in the Downtown Historic District.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Mr. & Mrs. Ben & Jennifer Carlson

Mr. & Mrs. David & Leslie Keifer

Mr. David Gautreau

Mr. Arthur Miller

Mrs. Joann Gregg

Mr. & Mrs. Todd & Barbara Pohlig

Ms. Dot Harrop & Mr. David Kievit

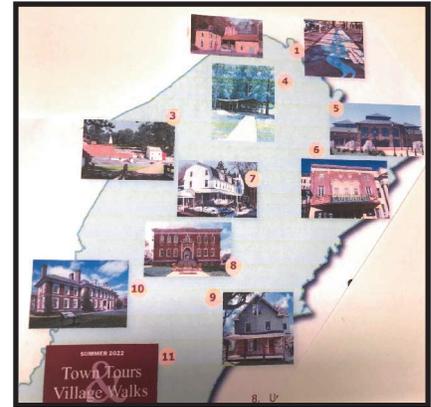
Mr. Shawn Reisin

Mr. Steven Hess

Mr. & Mrs. Greg & Mia Thompson
PA Tree Service

Spring Events at the Heritage Center

In **March**, the SRHC celebrated spring with a Zoom presentation that featured representatives from many places throughout Chester County. They shared their upcoming events, activities and programs that were planned for 2022.



In **April**, **Dr. Kevin Hicks**, a retired research leader at the USDA Research Service and former President of the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture, who currently serves on the Board at **Lundale Farm**, gave a Zoom presentation about their 10-year plan for **forest sustainability** on its 190 acres.

Lundale Farm is located **north of Phoenixville** on Pottstown Pike. It was originally founded by Sam and Eleanor Morris who had purchased the property in 1946 as a pleasant place to raise their children. In time, it was the land and farming that became the focus of their commitment and involvement. They also founded the French & Pickering Conservation Trust in 1967. Thanks to their foresight thousands of acres of open space have been preserved and enhanced public parks and trails have also become part of Chester County's landscape.

Dr. Hicks is leading the Lundale Farm initiative to battle spotted lantern flies as well as invasive plants and trees. His goal is to remove the invasive trees and plants since they grow quickly, reduce the amount of sunlight, and prevent native hardwood and softwood trees from growing. His plan is to regenerate the forest with sustainable trees and native plants in Lundale's wooded acreage.

Lundale Farm also has leased portions of its land and housing to farmers who are committed to growing wholesome foods, using organic methods that enhance the quality of the land and the community. There are even state-of-the-art greenhouses where food and flowers are grown year round. He invited everyone to visit Lundale Farm to explore its engaging environment **and stop at nearby Red Dog Market to purchase fruits, vegetables and flowers that were grown on Lundale Farm.**



This is a view of the Lundale Farm landscape



Here are students learning about an array of agricultural products grown throughout the year in a greenhouse.

Honoring the Heroines of the American Revolution

In May, the SRHC was very happy to host a very well attended in-person event. **Dr. Nancy Loane, our speaker**, has a doctorate in education and administration. She has given over 250 presentations across the USA, and is a long-time Board member of the Valley Forge Alliance as well as a life-time member of the Society of Descendants of the Army at Valley Forge. She also received a national book award for authoring her “Following the Drum: Women at the Valley Forge Encampment”.

Dr. Loane gave an excellent presentation about the women who were very much a part of the American Revolution. There were many women at the Valley Forge encampment. They made clothing, they cooked and gathered supplies. A unique example of a woman in the war zone is **Deborah Simpson**, who dressed as a man so she could join the army. She served for 18 months, posed as a man. She was given an honorable discharge and later married and had three children. She went on a tour with her husband and performed a musket drill that her audience loved. Paul Revere even wrote about her!

Catherine Littlefield Greene was General Nathaniel Greene’s wife. She was a young woman of 24 when she joined her husband at Valley Forge and spent the winter there with him. After the war Nathaniel Greene acquired a plantation named Mulberry Grove and moved to Georgia. Nathaniel died suddenly from a sun stroke shortly after they moved to the plantation. Catherine petitioned George Washington and was able to successfully gain ownership of their property. Her neighbor was Eli Whitney, the inventor of the cotton gin. It has been documented that Catherine worked with him to refine the interior components that made it successful. After General Greene died Catherine married Phineas Miller, who had been her children’s tutor. President George Washington and his wife Martha served as witnesses to their union. Her time spent at the Valley Forge encampment later became an important part of her life experience.



Pictured here (l to r) are Barbara & Dennis Ray, Nancy Loane and Joan & James Moore who are all SRHC members



Catherine Littlefield Greene Miller



Deborah Simpson

Spring Happenings & Remembering Dr. Don Harrop



The Barkley 4th graders visited the Heritage Center in June



The Royersford Women's Club came to the Heritage Center in April



Students from the University of Valley Forge did a wonderful Earth Day Clean Up at Renaissance Park



*Here is a picture of **Dr. Don Harrop** (on the right) with his dear friend **Dr. Pete Giannopoulos**. Sadly, he passed away late last year. We honor his memory with love and respect. He was a wonderful person who served and supported the community in so many ways. He is missed and remembered by everyone.*

UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE HERITAGE CENTER

Tuesday, September 13, 2022 at 7:30 PM

Dorothy Bedford, a member of our Heritage Center Board and a respected historian, will share the story of **The Industrial Village at Valley Forge**. This will be an in-person event.

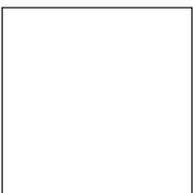
Thursday, October 13, 2022 at 5:30 PM

The Heritage Award Celebration honoring David & Susan Meadows will take place at The Foundry to recognize all that they both have done and their commitment to the Phoenixville community.

Thursday, November 10, 2022 at 7:30 PM **Jolie Chylack** a member of our Heritage Center Board, with 25 years of teaching conservation and natural history, will present **Experiencing Art & Nature to Conserve the Schuylkill River Watershed**.

The SRHC continues to welcome visitors. We hope that you will visit our museum and explore our interactive exhibits; most especially the Chester County unit's **Path to Freedom Trail**, that tells the story of the Underground Railroad.

We are open every Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 11:00AM to 3:00 PM



Schuylkill River Heritage Center
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